



BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL

7 – 18 October 2015

in partnership with



**BFI LONDON FILM FESTIVAL ARCHIVE GALA ANNOUNCED:
WORLD PREMIERE OF NEW RESTORATION OF
Anthony Asquith's SHOOTING STARS (1928)
WITH NEW SCORE BY JOHN ALTMAN**



"A spectacularly brilliant film, it was an immediate success and in one move established Asquith as one of the most interesting people working in British production at the time." Rachel Low, *A History of the British Film*

London, 20th August 2015. The Archive gala screening at the 59th BFI London Film Festival in partnership with American Express®, on Friday 16th October 2015 at the Odeon Leicester Square, will be the world premiere of a new restoration of Anthony Asquith's *Shooting Stars* (1928). Asquith's first film as co-director and scriptwriter, *Shooting Stars* is a fascinating drama set behind the scenes at a contemporary film studio. Newly restored by the BFI National Archive, *Shooting Stars* will be presented with a new live score by John Altman, BAFTA and Emmy award-winning composer whose work includes *Titanic* and *Goldeneye*.

Shooting Stars is a dazzling debut which boasts a boldly expressionist shooting style, dramatic lighting and great performances from its leads. Annette Benson (Mae Feather) and Brian Aherne (Julian Gordon) play two mis-matched, married stars and Donald Calthrop (Andy Wilkes) a Chaplin-esque star at the same studio, with whom Mae becomes romantically involved. Chili Bouchier, Britain's first sex symbol of the silent era, plays a key role as an actress/bathing beauty, an attractive foil to the comic antics of the comedian. The film manages to operate as a sophisticated, modern morality tale, while it's also both an affectionate critique of the film industry and a celebration of its possibilities. It teases the audience with its revelations of how the illusions of the world of film-making conceal ironic and hidden truths.

Asquith (son of the former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith) had privileged access to see Chaplin making ***The Circus*** on a trip to Hollywood and he had also been behind the scenes at German film studios. Both influences are clearly seen in the film. Asquith went on to have a hugely successful international career in the sound era with films such as ***Pygmalion***, ***The Importance of Being Earnest***, ***The Browning Version*** and ***The VIPs***.

The film has been meticulously restored by a team of BFI experts from materials held in the BFI National Archive, making this the definitive restoration to stand alongside those of previous BFI restorations of Asquith's ***Underground*** (1928) and ***A Cottage on Dartmoor*** (1929).

Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive said, *"We are delighted to be showcasing this remarkable film in a brilliant new restoration achieved after months of work from our dedicated teams at the BFI. ***Shooting Stars*** is a fascinating debut from one of Britain's greatest film-makers and to see it with a newly commissioned score performed live in the Art Deco splendour of the Odeon Leicester Square promises to be a very special experience."*

The new score by composer, John Altman, has been written for a twelve piece ensemble playing multiple instruments. It is full of a lively jazz influence, inspired by some of the sheet music for the popular song *"Ain't She Sweet"* which is seen on screen in the film. Altman is both an authentic and accomplished jazz musician as well as a BAFTA and Emmy award-winning composer of music for the big screen. He has composed, orchestrated and conducted for many films including the period music for James Cameron's ***Titanic***, and he composed the tank chase sequence in the James Bond film ***GoldenEye*** and won the Anthony Asquith Award for Achievement in Film Music for ***Hear My Song***.

John Altman said, *"For the new score I have been inspired by dance band sounds and Duke Ellington in 1927. It's not a slavish period recreation but I have tried to find an appropriate way of reflecting some of the plot twists and ironic deceptions through a series of interlinked musical themes. The score will be played by a very versatile group of musicians and we will end up using almost as many instruments as a complete orchestra through the whole film. I*

hope that the music will carry audiences effortlessly through the emotional highs and lows of this brilliant film."

There were famously two opposing reviews published in *Variety*, one British, one American, with the British review disparaging the film and the American giving it a strong thumbs-up. The film is now however fully appreciated as one of the few undisputed masterpieces of British silent cinema. Only Alfred Hitchcock has a higher critical reputation than Asquith in this period of late silent British cinema.

Credits:

SHOOTING STARS (UK 1928)

Director, AV Bramble, co-directed by Anthony Asquith.

Producer: H. Bruce Woolfe.

Screenplay: Anthony Asquith and J. Orton

Shooting Stars is a dazzling debut from first-time filmmaker Anthony Asquith, audaciously taking the film industry itself as the theme.

Despite the director credit going to veteran director A.V. Bramble, this is demonstrably the original work of rising talent Anthony Asquith, exhibiting all the attention-grabbing bravado of a young filmmaker with everything to prove. His original story offers sardonic insight into the shallowness of film stardom and Hollywood formulas by use of ironic counterpoint. He flaunts his dynamic cinematographic style and upgrades design and lighting by bringing in professionals.

Synopsis

A love triangle develops on set in a British movie studio filmed at Cricklewood in NW London, where a western and a slapstick comedy are being filmed back-to-back. Mae Feather (Annette Benson), a spoiled star jilts her husband, played by Brian Aherne for the comedian played by Donald Calthrop. In one of the best opening scenes of British silent cinema the handsome Brian Aherne appears as a cowboy, with his 'gal' in a calico frock in a classic 'western' rural romantic scene. The dove she cradles in her hands pecks at her viciously and the illusion is suddenly dispelled as the camera tracks back to reveal a studio's wooden sets. She becomes the screeching prima donna while her co-star husband remains calm, slightly amused and dignified as the entire studio staff tries to catch the offending bird. He is, in other words the real thing – he *is* his star persona. She on the other hand is entirely unlike her nice-girl character and is unwilling to give up the romance of the movies for the real thing. The situation spins rapidly out of control.

Shooting Stars marked the fiction feature debut of British Instructional Films which went on to produce a short-lived but significant run of very good late silent features including several which have been restored and released by the BFI in recent years: Walter Summers' *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands*(1928), Asquith's *Underground* (1928), *A Cottage on Dartmoor* (1929).

Supporters

Film restoration and new score supported by AIR Studios, Arts Council England, the British Board of Film Classification, LUMINOUS donors, the Michael Marks Charitable Trust, John & Jennifer McLellan, PRS for Music Foundation, and Betsy & Jack Ryan.

Notes to editors:

About the BFI

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Greg Dyke.

About the BFI National Archive

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 770,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts significant Special Collections of filmmakers' papers, including the papers of David Lean, Ken Loach and David Puttnam, as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.

About American Express® Company

American Express is a diversified worldwide travel, financial and network services company founded in 1850. It is a leader in charge and credit cards, Travellers Cheques, travel and insurance products.

Through American Express Invites, Cardmembers have access to enriched experiences at some of the UK's most sought after entertainment events, including best seats, exclusive offers and early-on-sale tickets. The company has multi - year partnerships with a range of entertainment institutions including AEG, Live Nation, Ticketmaster, Somerset House, The British Film Institute and National Theatre.

For more detail on the enriched service American Express offers its Cardmembers, please visit www.amex.co.uk/potential or connect with AmericanExpressUK on Facebook or Twitter @AmexUK

LFF Archive gala presentations

Each year a new restoration of a British silent feature film is premiered as the LFF Archive Gala. These restorations have played a major role in repositioning British silent cinema in the UK and internationally.

2009: Underground (Anthony Asquith, 1928)

2010: The Great White Silence (Herbert Ponting, 1924)

2011: The First Born (Miles Mander, 1928)

2012: The Manxman (Alfred Hitchcock, 1929)

2013: The Epic of Everest (Captain John Noel, 1924)

2014: The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands (Walter Summers, 1927)

Interviews

John Altman, composer, Robin Baker, Head Curator, BFI National Archive and Bryony Dixon, curator, silent film, BFI National Archive are available, by prior arrangement, for selected interviews via the press office.

*** PICTURE DESK ***

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI National Archive / BFI London Film Festival 2015 - Archive Gala

Press contact:

Brian Robinson, Communications Manager, Archive & Heritage, BFI, Tel +44 (0) 207 957 8940

brian.robinson@bfi.org.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Michael Marks Charitable Trust

